UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.2/1992/5/Add.2
4 May 1992

Original: FRENCH/ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Working Group on Contemporary Forms
of Slavery
Seventeenth session
4-13 May 1992
Items 4 and 5 of the provisional agenda

OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP DURING ITS FOURTEENTH, FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH SESSIONS

Information submitted by Governments, United Nations organs, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations

Note by the Secretary-General

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GE.92-12299/3786H

I. GOVERNMENTS

BAHRAIN

[30 March 1992]
[Original: English]

The concerned authorities of Bahrain inform that the practice of the slave trade, traffic in persons and the exploitation of persons do not exist in Bahrain. All the people residing in Bahrain enjoy the same rights regardless of their race, language, background or religion.

SAUDI ARABIA

[14 April 1992]
[Original: English]

1. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia does not, and never did, recruit children into governmental and non-governmental forces.

2. No contemporary forms of slavery are practised in Saudi Arabia.

BURKINA FASO

[14 April 1992]
[Original: French]

1. Within the context of the campaign against the exploitation of child labour and the prostitution of children, a number of policies have been adopted:

(a) Guidance of street children and young people in an open environment or in specialized re-educational and vocational training institutions;

(b) Keeping young rural people in the villages through programmes developed by the Young Farmers' Training Centres;

(c) Alerting teachers of the Koran to the problem so that they can take effective responsibility for children engaged in begging whom they receive for religious education; and

(d) Improving awareness of certain slavery-like situations such as:

(i) The household employment of young girls or boys without any particular status and without consistent remuneration; and

(ii) The exploitation by procurers of immigrant girls coming, in particular, from the countries of the subregion.

2. As for the traffic in persons and the exploitation of the prostitution of others, the first noteworthy fact is that procuring is developing in Burkina.

3. Unfortunately, although the relevant provisions of the Criminal Code are severe, they suffer from a lack of effective application. It is to be hoped, however, that the new Criminal Code which is due to enter into force in the near future, will be more vigorously applied in this particular area.

4. The second noteworthy fact is the persistence of forced and/or early marriages and of the obligation imposed on certain married women to work in order to reimburse the excessive dowries which their husbands have had to pay (in some parts of the country).

5. In an endeavour to prevent these situations from occurring, the Code of Persons and of the Family provides, inter alia, for:

(a) The establishment of a minimum age for marriage (17 for girls and 20 for boys) without court authorization;

(b) The principle of the consent of the future spouses to the marriage and of matrimonial freedom; and

(c) Prohibition of the dowry as a basic condition for marriage.

6. It should be noted that the revision of the Criminal Code (1946) takes account of the new forms of exploitation, particularly with respect to children.

II. INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

[18 March 1992]
[Original: French]

1. The Treaties establishing the European Communities did not provide for any Community competence, properly so-called, in respect of human rights. Nevertheless, in its preamble, the EEC Treaty affirms as the essential objective of the European Communities "the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of their peoples" and states that their action is based inter alia on the "fundamental rights recognized ... in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms ..." (preamble to the Single European Act).

2. At the internal level, the Commission of the European Communities plays an active part in the preparation of Community rules designed to coordinate the national provisions of the member States with regard to the protection of certain social categories. Thus, in the context of its programme of action for the implementation of the "Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers", adopted at the end of 1989, the Commission proposed, on 15 January 1992, a Council directive designed to protect young people under 18 years of age from conditions of work likely to harm their health, safety and development.

3. In order to ensure a uniform application of fundamental rights in the Community, the Commission submitted to the Council at the end of 1990 a communication concerning the accession of the European Community to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, concluded within the framework of the Council of Europe.

4. In its relationships with third countries, the Community endeavours to promote respect for human rights in accordance with international commitments such as the Charter of the United Nations. For example, article 5 of the Fourth Lomé Convention is entirely devoted to human rights, which form part of the objectives and principles of ACP-EEC cooperation. There is also annexed to the Convention a declaration (reflected in art. 5) in which the "Contracting Parties proclaim their determination to work effectively for the eradication of apartheid which constitutes a violation of human rights and an affront to human dignity".

5. The Community and its member States have also developed some positive measures to encourage the abolition of apartheid and have recently agreed to intensify the programme of these positive measures and to adapt it to the necessities of current developments.

6. Lastly, many cooperation agreements have already taken account of human rights as, in the preamble to the cooperation agreement with the countries members of the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration and in the first article of the cooperation and trade agreements with Chile and Argentina. The Rome Declaration of 20 December 1990 on relations between the European Community and the Rio Group reaffirms the determination of the

parties to "reinforce their relationship, with a view to ... supporting democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and promotion of social justice, respect for sovereignty, self-determination and non-intervention, and working together to create adequate conditions to eliminate poverty and all forms of racial, political, religious and cultural discrimination".

7. The Commission also recalls that its member States have entered into commitments, particularly with regard to the problem of forced labour, within the framework of the International Labour Organisation.

8. Inasmuch as resolution 1983/30 constitutes a contribution to the preparation of international standards in matters of human rights, its implementation should be encouraged at the international level. The analysis of the effective application of these standards, to be submitted to the Secretary-General and the Economic and Social Council at its first ordinary session in 1991, will encourage awareness by the general public and by Governments of the need to abolish all modern forms of slavery with a view to an improved protection of minorities and to respect for human rights.